



Governor's Renewable Energy Policy Conference
Siting and Permitting Large-Scale Projects in the California Desert and Beyond
March 24, 2010 - UC Riverside, Highlander Union Building (HUB)

A Policy Primer for the Afternoon Breakout Sessions

To assist in framing the conversations that will take place during the 10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. breakout sessions, each panel's moderator has written a brief overview of the panel topic. These policy papers and the corresponding three questions will guide breakout discussions between panelists and session attendees as well as the report back to the larger conference audience.

Breakout Session 3 - Planning for the Future: How do we ensure projects are built quickly and in the right places?

Moderator: Rich Ferguson, RETI. Panelists: Arthur Haubenstock, Brightsource; Jim Avery, California Transmission Planning Group; Johanna Wald, NRDC; Nancy Ryan, Commissioner, PUC; Tom Pogacnik, Deputy State Director of Resources, BLM; Anthony Eggert, Commissioner, CEC

The "right places" for renewable energy generation projects minimize environmental concerns associated with the projects and with the transmission lines needed to deliver the energy to consumers. The right places are also places where energy can be generated at reasonable cost to consumers while providing jobs, clean power and replacing power sources that produce air pollution and green house gas emissions. What kinds of trade-offs can we accept between cost to consumers, protection of species and the environment, and more efficient siting, permitting and construction?

Some private lands (such as those on disturbed soils, less critical habitat or those closer to existing infrastructure) offer great opportunities for large scale renewable projects which minimize environmental impacts and cost. However, private lands suitable for utility-scale renewable generation are often fragmented and held by many different property owners, creating serious obstacles and delays to construction.

Renewable energy projects often can be located and designed to minimize environmental concerns associated with generation and transmission. Doing so, however, may increase costs significantly. Solar and wind energy is least expensive where the sun is brightest and winds are strong, so limiting development in these areas increases cost to consumers. Increasing protection for species of concern usually increases cost as well. Locating a project farther from urban areas is likely to require longer transmission lines and requiring transmission lines to be underground increases costs dramatically.

Government land use plans - federal, state and local - determine where and under what conditions energy projects can be built. Historically, private energy developers have been relied on to choose their sites as long as development is consistent with these plans. Land use plans developed by different agencies may not be well coordinated and plans that are too restrictive may limit development.

The *Planning for the Future* Panel will discuss the following three questions:

- **How do we assess private lands for potential energy production and assemble them quickly for renewable development? How do we match this opportunity against faster access to public lands?**
- **What additional economic cost should be accepted to locate and build renewable energy and transmission projects which have less serious environmental concerns?**
- **How can we ensure that land use plans are coordinated and provide adequate areas for renewable energy generation? Should we rely on energy developers to identify sites consistent with these plans, or should government play a more active role in determining where projects are built?**